

# 2007 Fact Sheet

## Teens at Work Project Occupational Health Surveillance Program Massachusetts Department of Public Health

### Non-Fatal Work-Related Injuries to Massachusetts Teens, 2000-2004 FOOD SERVICE

The findings presented in this fact sheet cover only non-fatal injuries to Massachusetts teens working in the food service industry (i.e., restaurants, fast food places, snack bars). These injuries were identified by the *Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project (TAW)* during the calendar years 2000-2004 using data from workers' compensation claims (WC) and hospital emergency departments (ED). See our publication "Non-Fatal Work-Related Injuries to Massachusetts Teens, 2000-2004, An Overview" for a detailed description of the project. Our overview and industry-specific fact sheets are all available on the TAW website: [www.mass.gov/dph/teensatwork](http://www.mass.gov/dph/teensatwork).

#### Overview

More Massachusetts teens work in restaurants and other food service establishments than in any other single industry. An average of 30% of 15- to 17-year-olds—more than 24,000 a year—worked in the food service industry between 2000-2004<sup>1</sup>. Year after year, food service remains the industry in which the largest proportion of work-related injuries to teens occurs.

Approximately 27% (633) of the 2,370 work-related injuries to teens identified by the TAW project between 2000-2004 happened in restaurants and other food services. Nearly 59% (371) of these injuries were identified through workers' compensation data. Below are the highlights of our most recent findings on work-related injuries to teens in the Massachusetts food service industry.

#### Injuries by Gender

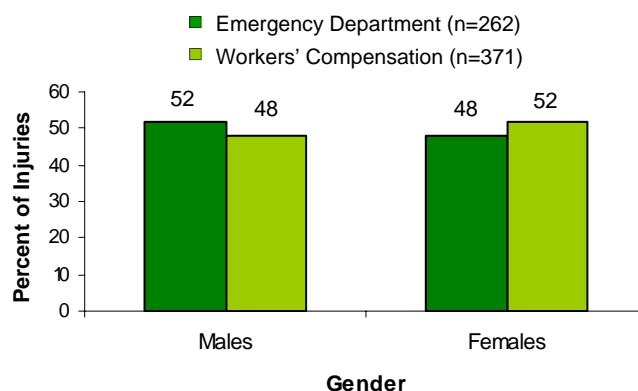
Males and females working in food service had similar numbers of injuries (Figure 1).

Males made up 33% of the food service workforce in 2003, yet accounted for 52% of the ED injuries and 48% of the WC injuries.

#### Injuries by Age Group

The majority of injuries in both data sets occurred in 16- and 17-year-olds (Figure 2).

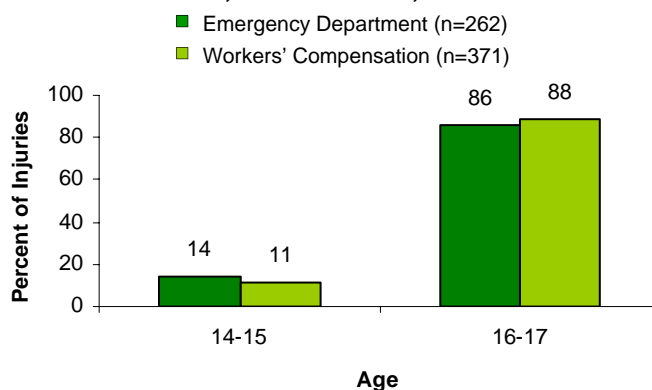
**Figure 1. Work-Related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Gender and Data Source, Massachusetts, 2000-2004**



Note: Of the 633 cases identified in this time period, there were 6 WC cases for which gender was missing. These cases were not included in the calculations.

Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

**Figure 2. Work-Related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Age Group and Data Source, Massachusetts, 2000-2004**



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2000-2004). Current Population Survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Injuries by Establishment Type

Injuries to food service workers occurred most frequently in limited-service establishments (Figure 3). The majority (56%) of injuries happened in “limited-service restaurants” (i.e., fast food places, pizzerias) and “snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars” (34%) (i.e., donut/bagel shops, coffee shops).

Only 23% of all injuries in the food service industry occurred in full-service restaurants.

## Injuries by Type

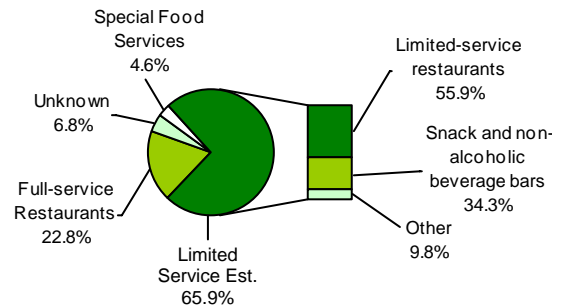
Within both data sources, “cuts, lacerations, and punctures” were the most common work-related injuries sustained by teens in food service; “burns” were the second most common (Figure 4).

In terms of differences between data sources, there were more “sprains, strains and tears” and “burns” found in the WC data than were found in the ED data.

I was working by myself on a Wednesday night and there were no other employees onsite. The store was very busy and I was working the counter and the drive-through. I hurried to brew coffee and pulled out the basket not realizing the coffee was still brewing. Hot water and grounds spilled onto my hand. I ran it in cold water and called my boss. He told me it wasn't a major injury and to keep working. He didn't come to the store and didn't want me to go to the “expensive” ER. The next morning my hand was swollen and red and purple. I went to the ER and they told me I had 2nd degree burns.

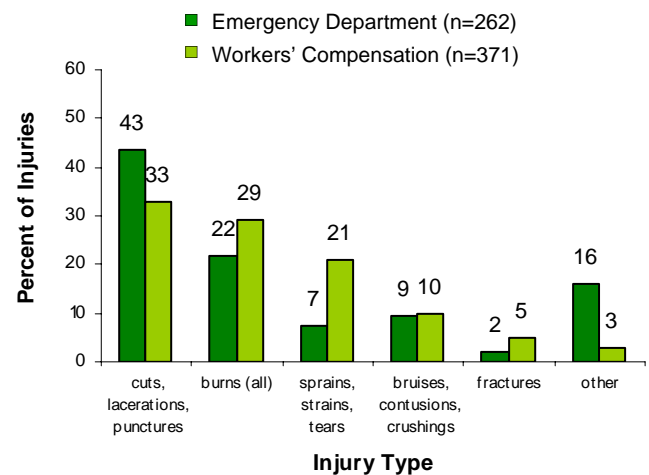
~ 16-year-old worker at a coffee shop

**Figure 3. Work-Related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Establishment Type, Massachusetts, 2000-2004 (n=633)**



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

**Figure 4. Work-Related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Injury Type and Data Source, Massachusetts, 2000-2004**



Note: Of the 633 injuries identified in this time period, there were 60 cases (16 from ED and 44 from WC) for which injury type was unknown. These cases were not included in the calculations.

Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

## Injury Type by Age Group

Injury type differed by age (Figure 5). Fourteen- and 15-year-olds sustained more “cuts, lacerations, and punctures” and “bruises, contusions, and crushings,” while the older group sustained more “burns” as well as “sprains, strains, and tears.”

## Injury Type by Gender

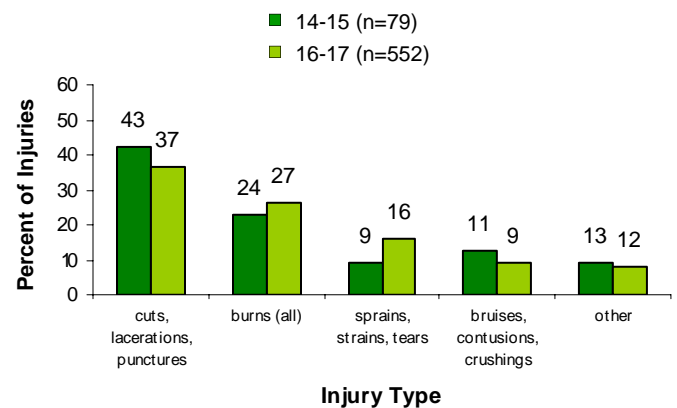
Injury types differed by gender (Figure 6); this may be attributed to different tasks assigned to males and females. The most common types among males were “cuts, lacerations, and punctures” which accounted for nearly half of the injuries. “Burns” were the most common injury type (32%) among females.

I had been working for about 13 hours at a catering job. It was 1 AM and I was exhausted. We were carrying all the dishes and leftover food from the van to the kitchen. It had rained earlier, so the ground was wet. I was carrying a full bus tub, and had trays and dishes on top of it. I was taking little steps, but my vision was restricted by the load. When I reached the slate stairs, I slipped and fell—it was a bad fall. I was so tired, I just went to bed, but the next morning my face looked bad so I went to the hospital. I had a cracked sinus cavity and bruises.

~ 16-year-old employee of  
a catering company

*The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts specify that 16 and 17-year-olds can work a maximum of 9 hours per day, and only until midnight in restaurants on nights not preceding a regularly scheduled school day.*

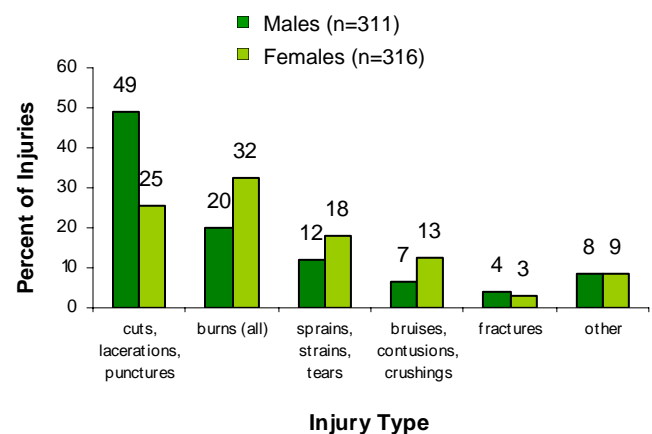
**Figure 5. Work-related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Injury Type and Age Group, Massachusetts, 2000-2004**



Note: Of the 631 injuries identified in this time period for which age at time of injury was >14, there were 60 cases (3 from 14-15 year-olds and 57 from 16-17 year-olds) for which injury type was unknown. These cases were not included in the calculations.

Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

**Figure 6. Work-Related Injuries to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Injury Type and Gender, Massachusetts, 2000-2004**



Note: Of the 627 injuries identified in this time period for which gender was known, there were 60 cases (23 males and 37 females) for which injury type was unknown. These cases were not included in the calculations.

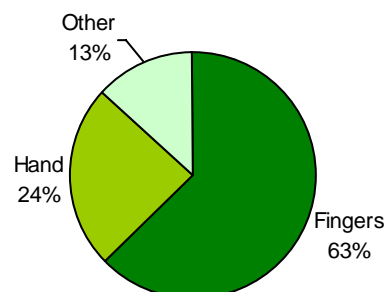
Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

## Cuts, Lacerations, and Punctures by Body Part Affected

The majority of “cuts, lacerations, and punctures” happened to young workers’ fingers (Figure 7). Their hands were the second most common body part affected by these types of injuries.

Of the 214 cuts, information about the source was available for 71 cases. Knives were the cause of 44% of cuts, broken glass and dishes caused 21%, and seven injuries were from food slicers. The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts specify that any workers under 18 years old are prohibited from operating, cleaning or repairing power-driven meat-slicers.

**Figure 7. Work-Related Cuts, Lacerations, and Punctures to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Body Part Affected, Massachusetts, 2000-2004 (n=214)**



Note: Of the 214 “cuts, lacerations, and punctures” identified in this time period, there were 4 injuries for which the body part affected was missing. These cases were not included in the calculations.

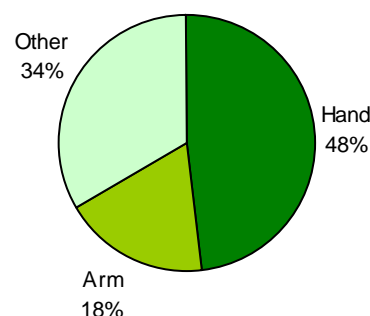
Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

## Burns by Body Part Affected

Hands were the part of the body most often affected by burns (Figure 8). The second most common specific body part affected by burns was the arm.

Of the 149 burns, information about the source was available for 76 cases. Hot water or another hot liquid caused 53% of burns, and grease and hot oil were the cause of 24% of burns.

**Figure 8. Work-Related Burns to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Body Part Affected, Massachusetts, 2000-2004 (n=149)**



Note: Of the 149 burns identified in this time period, there were 3 burns for which body part affected was missing. These cases were not included in the calculations.

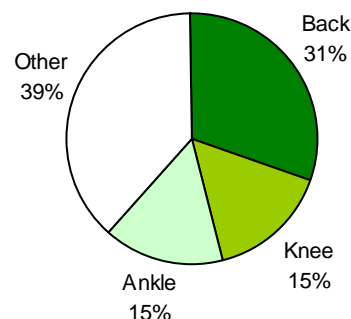
Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

## Sprains, Strains, and Tears by Body Part Affected

The greatest proportion of “sprains, strains, and tears” was to the back (Figure 9). Far less affected than the back, were the next two most frequently affected specific body parts - the knee and ankle.

Of the 86 “sprains, strains, and tears,” information about the manner in which the injury was inflicted was available for 58 (68%). Forty-one percent of injuries were attributed to slips or falls, and 21% were injured while lifting an object.

**Figure 9. Work-Related Sprains, Strains, and Tears to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Body Part Affected, Massachusetts, 2000-2004 (n=86)**



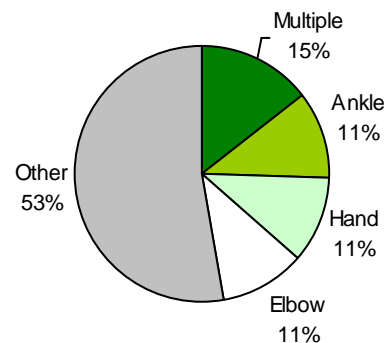
Note: Of the 86 “sprains, strains, and tears” identified in this time period, There was 1 sprain for which body part affected was unknown. This case was not included in the calculations.

Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

**Figure 10. Work-Related Bruises, Contusions, and Crushings to Teens under Age 18 in Food Service, by Body Part Affected, Massachusetts, 2000-2004 (n=55)**

## Bruises, Contusions, and Crushings by Body Part Affected

Ankle, hand and elbow were the three specific body parts most frequently affected by “bruises, contusions, and crushings” (Figure 10). Twenty-one out of 55 injuries had information about the source, and 14 (67%) listed the floor, ground, or stairs as the source of the injury.



Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

At the time of my injury, I was making fries, which I had not done before. I was in a hurry because my shift was over in 15 minutes and my boss wanted me to get this done before I left. A metal separator from between the fryolators fell into the hot oil. I tried to use the tongs to get it out but it slipped and fell in again. This time, I was splashed by hot oil in my eyes.

~ 14-year-old fast food restaurant employee

*The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts specify that persons under 16 years old may not operate fryolators.*

## What Injured Teens Have to Say

Since the project's inception in 1993, *Teens at Work Project* staff have completed phone interviews with 249 young restaurant workers injured on-the-job. While the information from these interviews is not necessarily representative of all young restaurant workers who have been injured, it nevertheless provides some important insights.

Of these interviewed teens:

- Fifty-four percent reported they had received no on-the-job training about how to work safely and avoid injury.
- Twenty percent reported they had no work permits for their jobs at the time they were injured. **NOTE:** Massachusetts child labor laws require work permits which are obtained through the school district where the teen resides or attends school.
- As a result of their injuries, teens reported they could not perform their usual activities for an average of 24 days.
- Seventy-three percent believed their injuries were preventable.
- Nineteen percent reported that no supervisor or person responsible for supervising them was on the premises at the time of injury.

**If you have any questions about the information presented here, or would like to learn more about the *Teens at Work Project*, contact Project Coordinator, Beatriz Pazos Vautin at 617-624-5677.**

